

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, May 30. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**E have a particular Relation of a Cow, which on the 25th. of March, 1691. calv'd a monstrous sort of a Calf, about eight Miles from Bath in Somerset-shire, with an Excellence of Flesh like a Commode: Pray what Natural or other Reason may be assign'd for such a strange Production?

Ans. Zuingl. in his *Theat. Vol.* gives an Account of an honest Matron, who was deliver'd of a Child that had upon its Head 5 Horns, and from the upper part of its Forehead hung backward a very long piece of Flesh that cover'd most part of its back, with other Deformities. *Camerarius* speaks of another that brought forth a Bear; and *Barth.* of a third that laid 2 Eggs. We have many Instances of this sort, and therefore I see no reason that the Caprices of Nature shou'd not appear also in a lower rank of the Creation. The last Summer the Colt with its Top-knots was bruted abroad, and this Summer a Calf mounts the Stage with a second Monumental Toy-shop upon its Head, being the Subject almost of every Bodies talk and Curiosity, for the Inquisition of a few more thoughtful, of which the Querrist is one, to whom we offer our Sentiments of it:—As we shan't juggle out the immediate Providence of God in a Work of this Nature, so can't we leave the Prerogative of second Causes, or deny that this may be an absolute Work of Nature: The formative Power belongs to the Vegetative Life, and the Power of Imagination is confin'd to the sensitive, both which are eminently strong in Animals; (perhaps stronger than in rationals, whose defects are supply'd by reason :) *Jacob* knew this, when he laid his colour'd Sticks before the Impregnating Flock, that they might conceive their Fetus parti-colour'd, and if he had laid a Top-knot before 'em, or at least dress'd a Kid with a Top-knot, the ingendring Females would probably have made similar Conceptions, both in Colour and Protuberancies of Flesh. I suppose it might be Holy-day, and the old Milk-maid might stand extraordinarily rigg'd before the Cow and Bull in the Act, when this Calves-head and Top-knot were imaginarily form'd by the teeming Brute. If the Extas'd Cow had view'd the Milk-maid all over, perhaps she might have Conceive'd a brutal Milk-maid, which (like those officious Goblins we are told of) might with its Mouth and Fore-feet have done the Work of the Dairy. For the imaginative Powers in Generation, see Numb. 15. Q. 2.

Quest. 2. Why does Trouble of Mind, Distraction, &c. take away Reason?

Ans. These things take away Reason just as much as a Mist takes away the Sun, or a Hand, or a Wall before any Object, or too great a distance takes away our

Eyes. Those Similitudes are more than common ones, for they enter into the Nature of the thing. The Soul is fetter'd in the Body, nor can it move, unless it takes its Chains along with it. 'Tis there as well crippled as confined, and must use the Crutches of Sense to exert at least any Action, which depends on outward Images: Now if even those Crutches too are broken, the Man is a double Cripple. Our meaning is, that in Distraction or any thing of that Nature, the Animal Spirits being affected, the Fancy must of necessity be disturb'd, and all Images and Notions which we have from Sense, extremely distorted and deform'd; none of 'em, or but very few, lying in that Method or Order they formerly did, but appearing much like the Ruines of a Noble Edifice, here one straggling Pillar, and there another: Now things being in this Condition, and the Soul having so much dependance on the Body, by its close connexion therewith, which we must own is easier experienc'd than explain'd, it can't be otherwise but that the external Acts thereof must be very confus'd and irregular—What its Actions are in relation to its innate Idea's, spiritual Objects, &c. we can't so well resolve; ingeniously acknowledging, we have never yet made the Experiment; in the mean while 'tis probable that even those Actions are disturb'd too, though the Power and Principle still remaining, the Ratio Ratiocinans, as before, or rather (might we use the word) Ratio Ratiocinatura.

Quest. 3. What is Death?

Ans. Not to be, and to cease to be, is much the same: It sometimes falls out that the more common a thing is, the more difficult it is to speak well of it, as in many sensible Objects. Nothing is more easie than to discriminate Life and Death, and yet to explicate the Nature of both, is a severe task, because the Union or Dis-union of a most perfect form with its matter, is inextricable; however, we shall offer those things that have given us the greatest satisfaction in our Enquiries—Death (or a Cessation of Doing and Suffering) is generally agreed to be the greatest Evil in Nature, because 'tis a destruction of Nature itself; but why it should be represented so terrible, is as great a Riddle to me, as a certain Knowledge of what Death really is.—This is the common Plea of Mortals, *Here we know and are known*, and all the Enterprizes we take in hand we have the satisfaction of reflection and a review when they are past, but Dying deprives us of knowing what we are doing, or what other State we are commencing. 'Tis a leap in the dark, not knowing where we shall light, as a late Naturalist (to say no worse of him) told his inquisitive Friend when he was going to die. But this is a Weakness, which as it makes Men anticipate their Misery, so it enlarges it too. We look upon Nature with our Eyes, not with our Reason, or we should find a certain sweetness in Mortality, for that can be no loss which can never be mist or desir'd again.—As *Caligula* pass'd by, an Old Man requested him that he might be put to Death? Why, says *Cæsar*, are you not dead already?—There is something in Death (sometimes at least) that is desir'd by wise Men, who know 'tis one of the Duties of Life to die, and that Life would be a Slavery if the Power of Death were taken away.—I had the Curiosity to visit two certain Persons, one had been hang'd and the other drown'd, and both of 'em very miraculously brought to Life again;—I ask'd what Thoughts they had, and what Pains they were sensible of? The Person that was Hang'd said, He expected some sort of a strange change, but knew not what, but the Pangs of Death were not so intolerable as some sharp Diseases; nay, he could not be positive whether he felt any other Pain than what his fears created; He added, that he grew senseless by little and little, and at the first his Eyes represented a brisk, shining, red sore of Fire, which grew paler and paler, till at length it turn'd into a black, after which he thought no more, but insensibly asled the part of one that falls asleep, not knowing how or when. The other gave me almost the same account, and both were dead (apparently) for a considerable time. These Instances are very satisfactory in Cases of violent Death, and for

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